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Mr. Carderera's Reply to Rios y Rios.

Relating to the Memoir of Mr. Angel de los Rios y Rios, entitled "The most authentic portrait and dress of Christopher Columbus."
(Bulletin of the Royal Academy of History, Vol I, No. III, February 1879, pp. 255-268.)

It is particularly in our time, that inquiries concerning the most recondite details relating to the life and actions of a celebrated man, have been made by historians, who have shown a perseverance equal to their admiration, in order to bequeath to posterity the memory of their favorite heroes. But their investigations never were pursued with so much eagerness and persistency as at present, to ascertain what were their features, dress and personality. If the admirers of glorious deeds are satisfied with the image of those who achieved them, the critic when discussing the resemblance, is not

as scrupulous and persevering, as those who appreciate and value them. To record great actions, fix the age and date and examine documents in the confusion of many archives, appeared less arduous than searching for a true portrait, compare its faithfulness or authenticity, with the supposed original, and study also, his sayings and transactions.

We now come to Christopher Columbus what a vast number of historians and critics have made him the subject of their writings! The simple mention of the Bibliotheca Americana Vestustissima is sufficient to astonish the literary world with the countless works, dissertations, and pamphlets, devoted to the glorious sailor; and yet, in what relates to his personal appearance, it must be confessed, that those who made a careful study of it, are very few. To-day, our curiosity, for want of a

master piece, or of a portrait perhaps, ascribed to Raphael himself, must, to a certain extent, be satisfied with a damaged copy and two engravings, the only likenesses acceptable and known until now, of a true model. It is with deep regrets that we say the only one, for though we have searched for them with great eagerness, no new documents have reached us, until 1847, when this academy honored us with the highly appreciated task of making a report, which was published in 1850.

In that short work, we criticised our carelessness during the two last centuries, in accepting the various portraits of Columbus, which having been gradually altered, became so different from the admitted model, or models, as to excite the laughter of every intelligent person, for they looked more like the counterfeit presentments of a stage gallant, than of an austere mariner. As a proof of

this, it is sufficient to remember those in the archives of the Indias, in Havana, as well as the ones published by Muñoz and Cladera and others, all mostly imaginary. A few years ago, by an inconceivable aberration, a distinguished member of the French Institute, presented to the admiration of Europe, as a true portrait of the Great Admiral, that of an unknown individual dressed in the costume of the time of Louis XIII, an engraving of which, communicated to this Academy, caused the report we made upon the Portraits of Columbus.

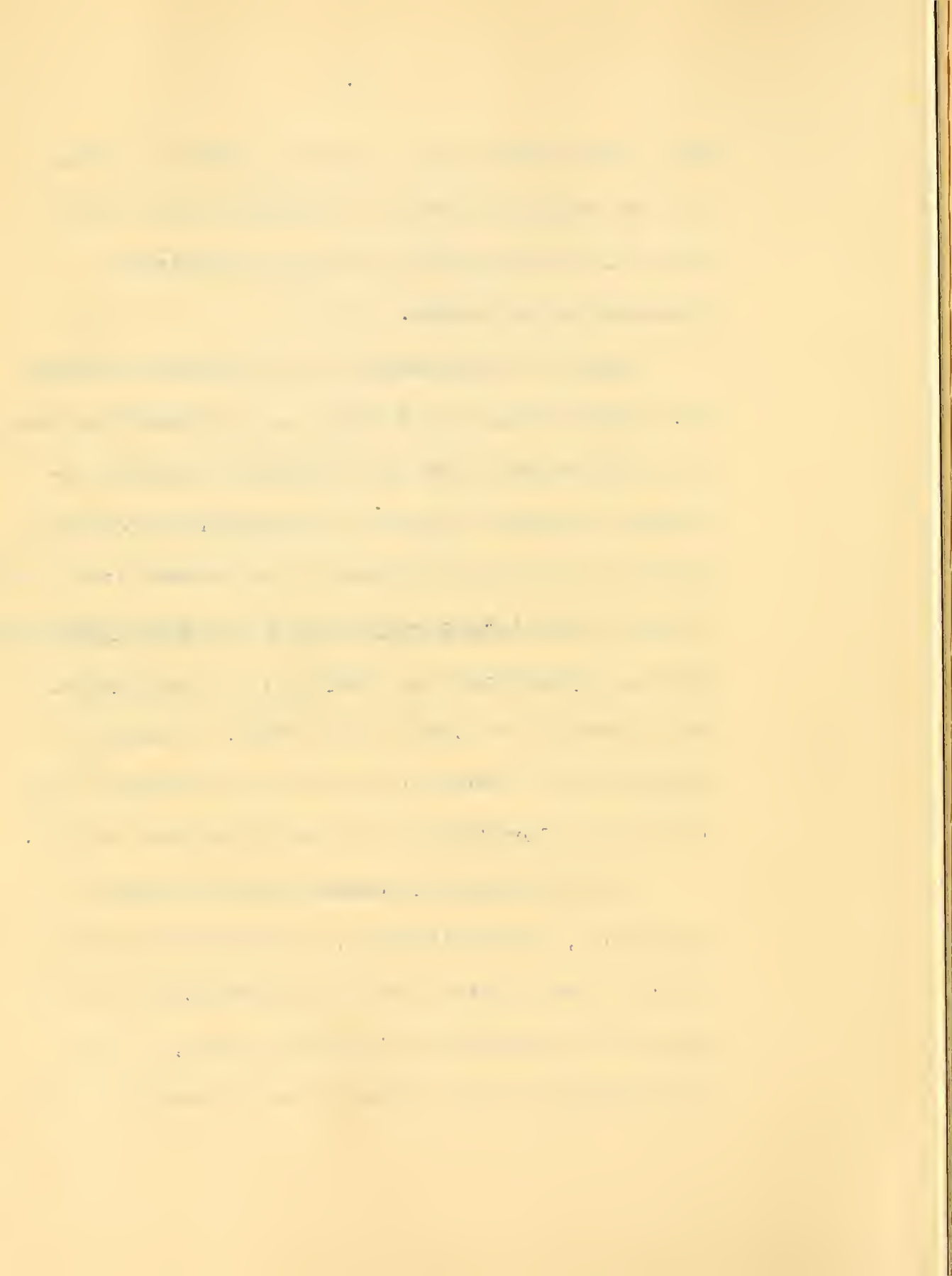
We do not think worth while to mention the engraving placed at the beginning of the book entitled "Select Letters from Columbus" (Cartas escogidas de Colón), published in 1870, by the Rev. H. Mayor, which represents Saint Christopher, alleged to be from a colored drawing by the pilot Juan de la Cosa, giving the face of that Saint as a portrait of the Admiral,



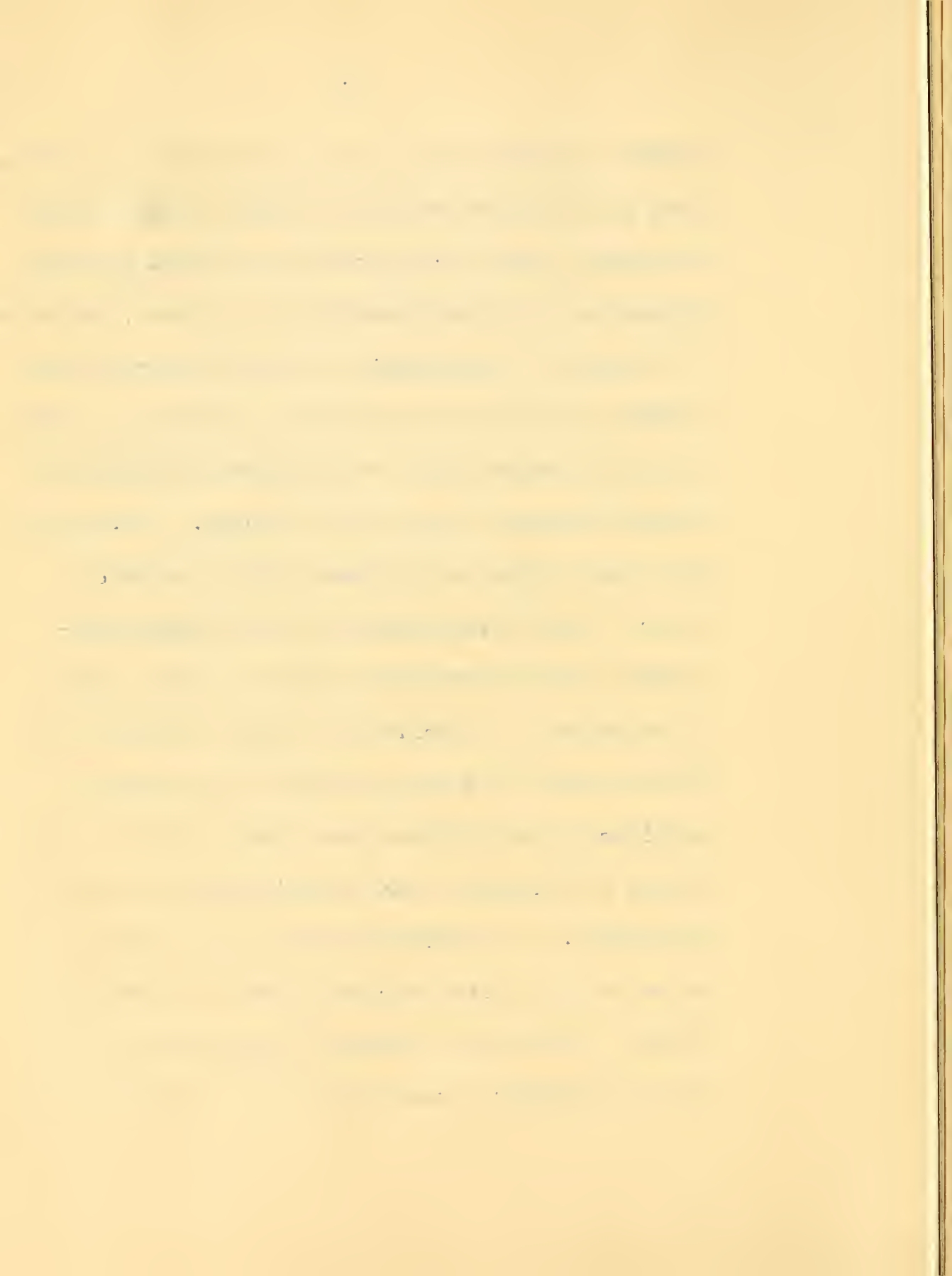
but so far from being a true one, were we to take off the enormous beard and abundant head of hair from it, the features of the most effeminate Narcissus would appear.

Sometime ago, prompted by a patriotic feeling, Mr. Angel de los Rios y Rios, our corresponding member, having heard that the Colonial Secretary intended to erect a statue to the celebrated Admiral, wished to add a little stone to our modest work, and thought that he could "present, as he says, some other data to corroborate and establish his conclusions ." Very grateful for such a kind offer, we accept it willingly and receive it, as we do everything tending to the glorification of the illustrious sailor.

The distinguished Academician reproduces in his Memoir, the preliminary, or principal observations, which we made upon the authenticity of the portrait or portraits, still left to us, of the personage who is the object of our discussion; he



refers to what we said as to their source and place, such as the famous Museum of Paulus Jovius, Bishop of Nocera, already celebrated and visited by many princes of the time of Charles V who, also, intended to visit it; to the zeal and perseverance of the founder, as shown by his letters, applying to great lords and artists, for the authentic portraits of hundred persons to enrich his gallery. Mr. de los Rios also values the engraved likenesses which, after a careful examination, we had already submitted, then he compares the dates of the voyages of Columbus, and calculates the most probable date when he could have been painted in the dress resembling that of a franciscan monk, as seen by the Curate of Palacios, when returning from his second expedition. The eminent Academician, wishing to prove that the said dress belonged to no religious orders, enters into a careful examination upon the one that Columbus could have worn as a Mariner, and



infers that the jacket and hood on the portrait reproduced in the engraving to be discussed later, belonged more to the former profession than to a monastic order. Mr. de los Rios devotes a large part of his Memoir (showing therein his fondness for the navy, and his special knowledge of what pertains to it), to demonstrate the variety of costumes and characteristics of that calling; then after mentioning some of the facts and texts presented by us, in the last part of our first report relating to the dress of different classes of men in those times, he enumerates and explains with curious details, the one that Columbus, his companions and other sailors, while navigating from the west to the north, were accustomed to wear oftener in order to protect themselves better from the cold, dampness and other inclemencies of the weather, he points out to the hood used to this day, by Biscayan sailors. Producing more texts, and going back to



the remotest periods, he discusses the variety and resemblance of the naval dress and that of other fatiguing avocations such as those followed by soldiers and shepherds; and, noting the successive modifications in similar costumes and other means of protection for the body, his retrospective review reaches back to the time of Trojan, and compares the dress of some of the figures represented upon that celebrated column. Then, Mr. de los Rios, treating the question of the most authentic portrait of Columbus, agrees with us upon the surest means to prove its existence in the engraving taken from the painting in the Museum of Jovius, as it appears in the Elogios by that writer. He takes notes of, and accepts our conclusion, as to the importance we gave to that engraving, owing as much to the fact of its being the oldest known, as to the singular dress similar to that of a franciscan monk, worn by Columbus, a circumstance proved by an

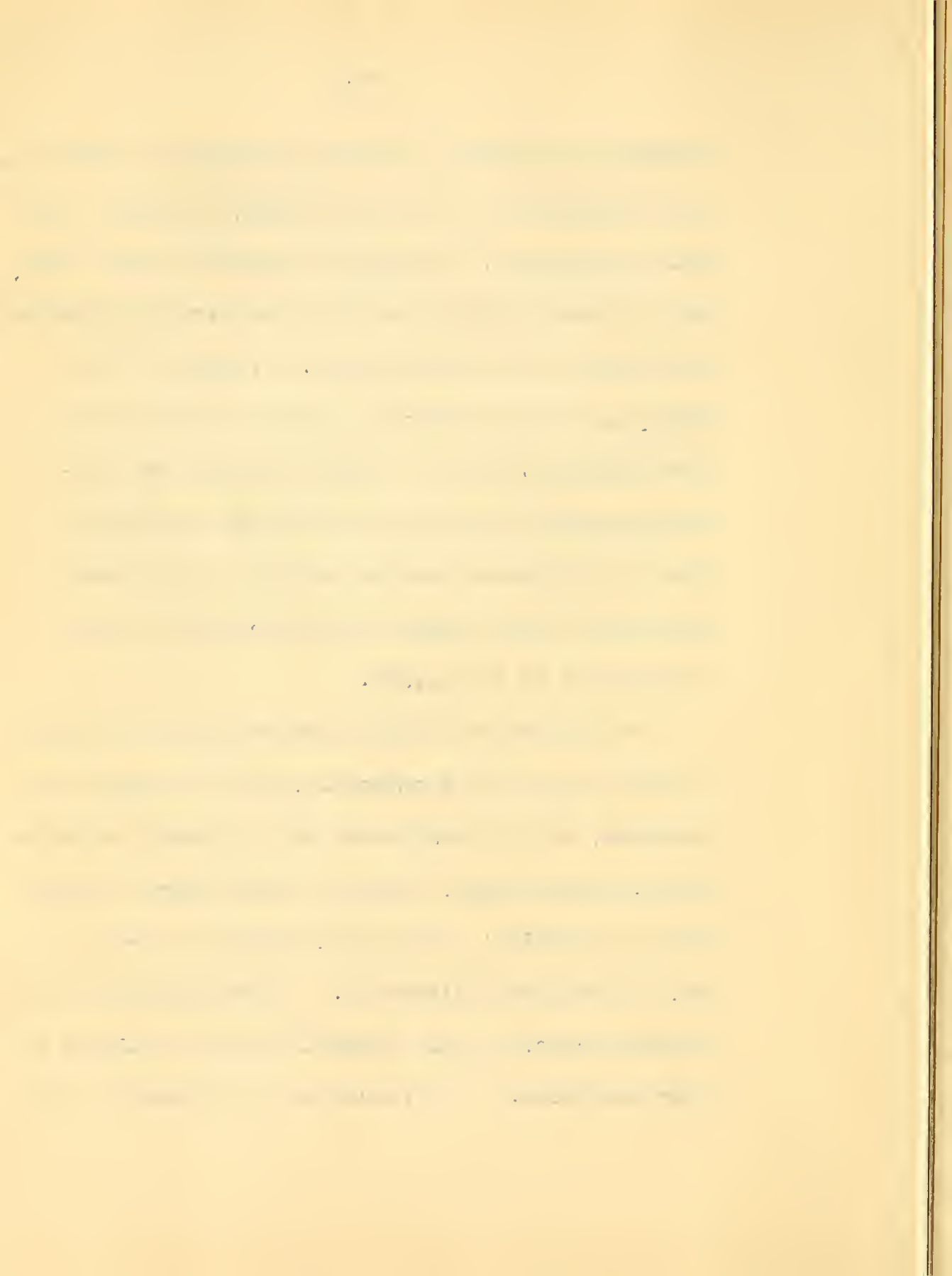


eye witness, and afterward, by the guarantees of the Editor of that book; from all this, it results an irrefutable argument in favor of the existence of a portrait of the glorious mariner, painted from life.

If, from what has been said until now, it appears that we agree with the appreciations of Mr. de los Rios, we share also some of his other opinions. The eminent Academician supposes, first: that, having placed it at the beginning of our memoir we must consider as the most valuable, the engraving of the portrait of Columbus, copied from that of A. Capriolo for his "Centi capitani illustri." Second: that in his opinion, that engraving is the same as the one in the Elogios." In regard to the first statement, an examination of the two plates will show the propriety and necessity for that preference. In what relates to the second, that is to say, to the perfect, and identical

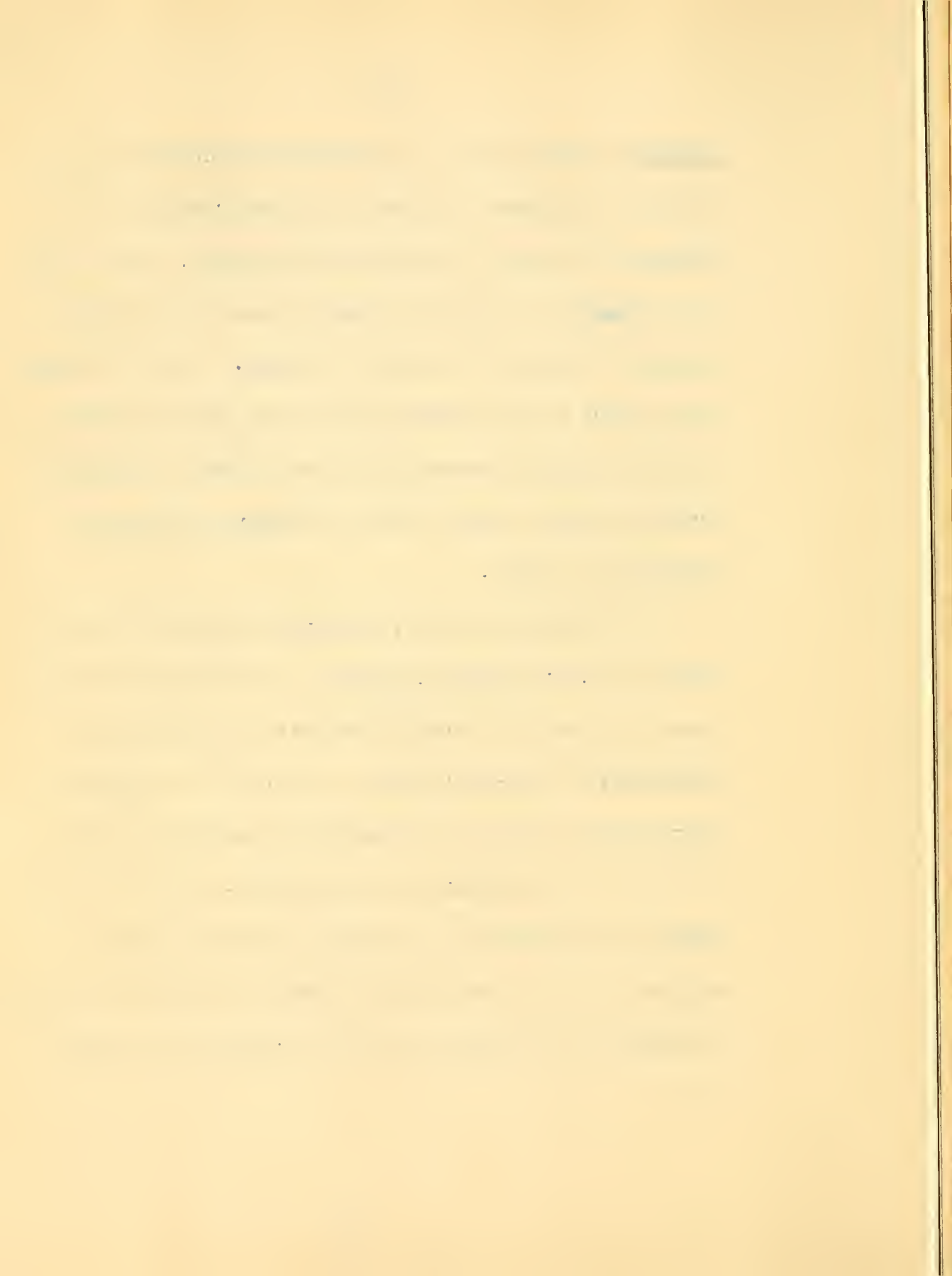
resemblance between the two engravings, we think that the comparison we are going to make, will show certain differences, and cause a suspicion, that there was a second portrait painted from nature by another hand than the one which made the first for the Elogios, without asserting, however, that it may have proceeded from the Jovius museum, and without pretending that these variations, resulting from the different schools and mode of treatment followed by each artist, would prevent the good resemblance of a portrait.

At all events, and as, unfortunately, we have to help us in this examination, only two small engravings, one of them coarse and confused (preferred by Mr. de los Rios), they are insufficient to form an exact opinion; we abstain, for that reason to make a positive affirmation. Notwithstanding this inconvenience, we will proceed with our analysis of both portraits. The first one, the oldest or the



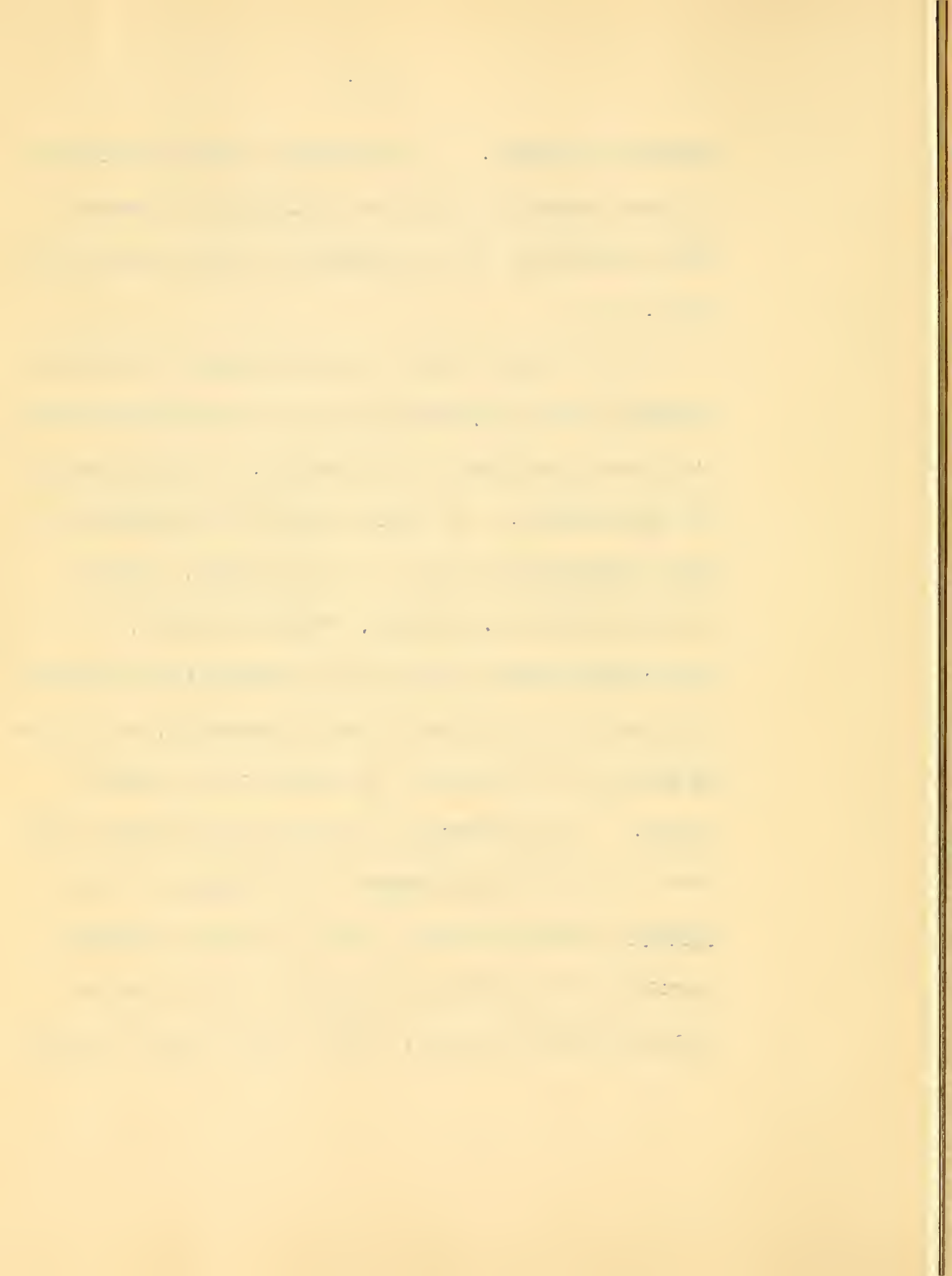
matrix, (sic) as Mr. de los Rios properly calls it, shows us Columbus as seen in the engraving in the Elogios, a little less than half length, and as far as the hands, which are somewhat out of the wide monastic sleeve of the left forearm. He is dressed in a close fitting gown with a long cape attached to it, and slightly resembling that of some religious orders, even to that worn in certain franciscan convents of Italy.

The proportions and general shape of the head the long face (rostro luengo), and the curve of the nose, are quite in conformity with the features described by eye-witnesses; the chin is somewhat larger than that on the Capriolo engraving placed by us at the beginning of our report. The rest is vague and uncertain; the right eye brow forms a perfect arch, while the left one is a little straight; the upper lip blurred, and the muscles of the face



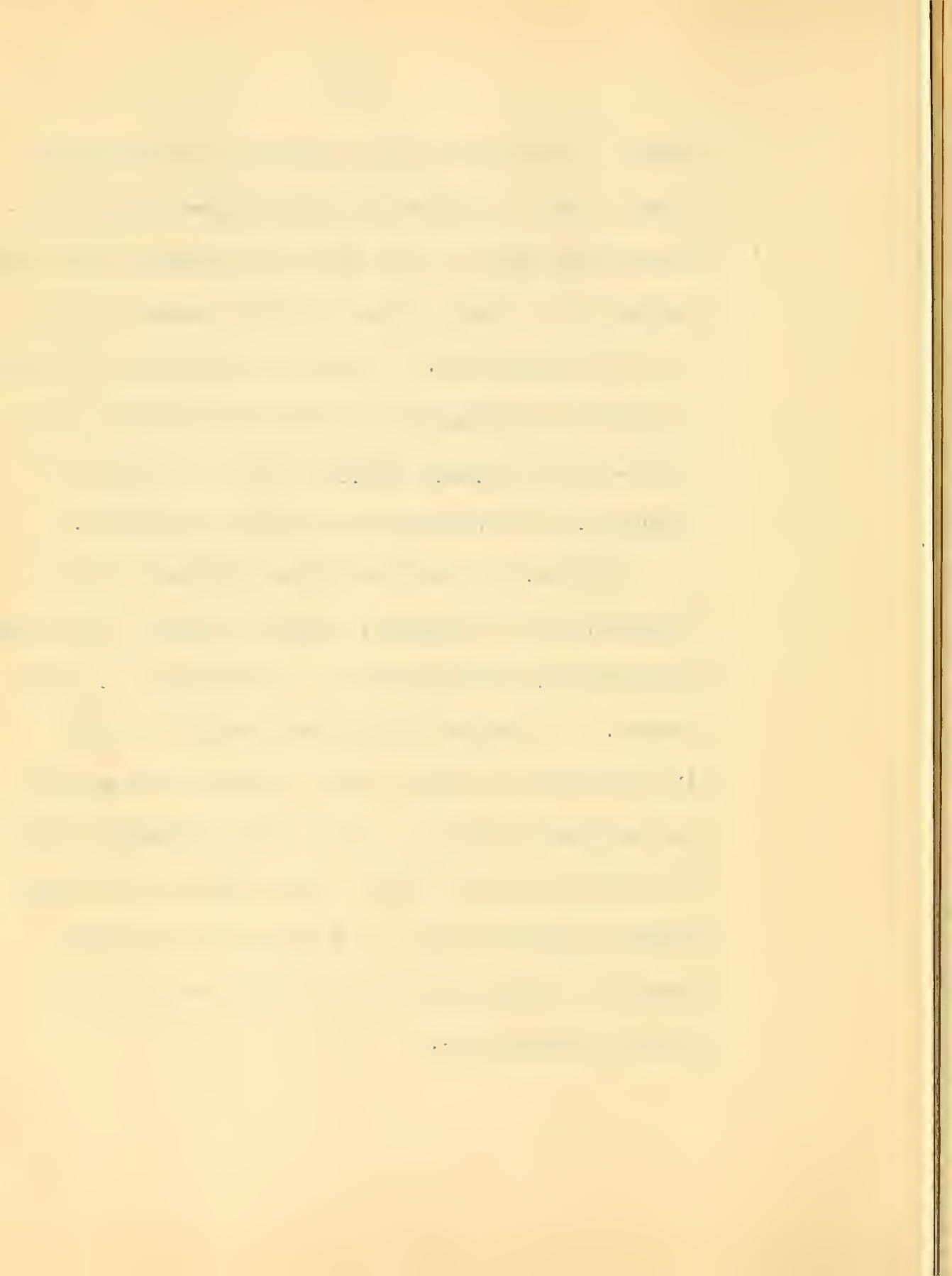
scarcely defined. It is likely, that the process of wood engraving was then inadequate to render more perfectly, all the details of that sympathetic face.

On the other hand, the plate made by Capriolo differs from the preceding one, and reproduces with relative clearness and correction, the physiognomy of the Admiral. At first sight, it presents the same appearance as that of some others, though a little older and, perhaps, somewhat fuller, a noticeable defect in all the engravings by Capriolo. The curve of the nose is less pronounced, as on the painting in the Library, to which we will refer later. The outlines of the face differ from those seen in the former portrait of Columbus in the Elogios, being thinner, with the curves scarcely perceptible and almost straight, as far down to the maxillary muscles, while in our copy, they are



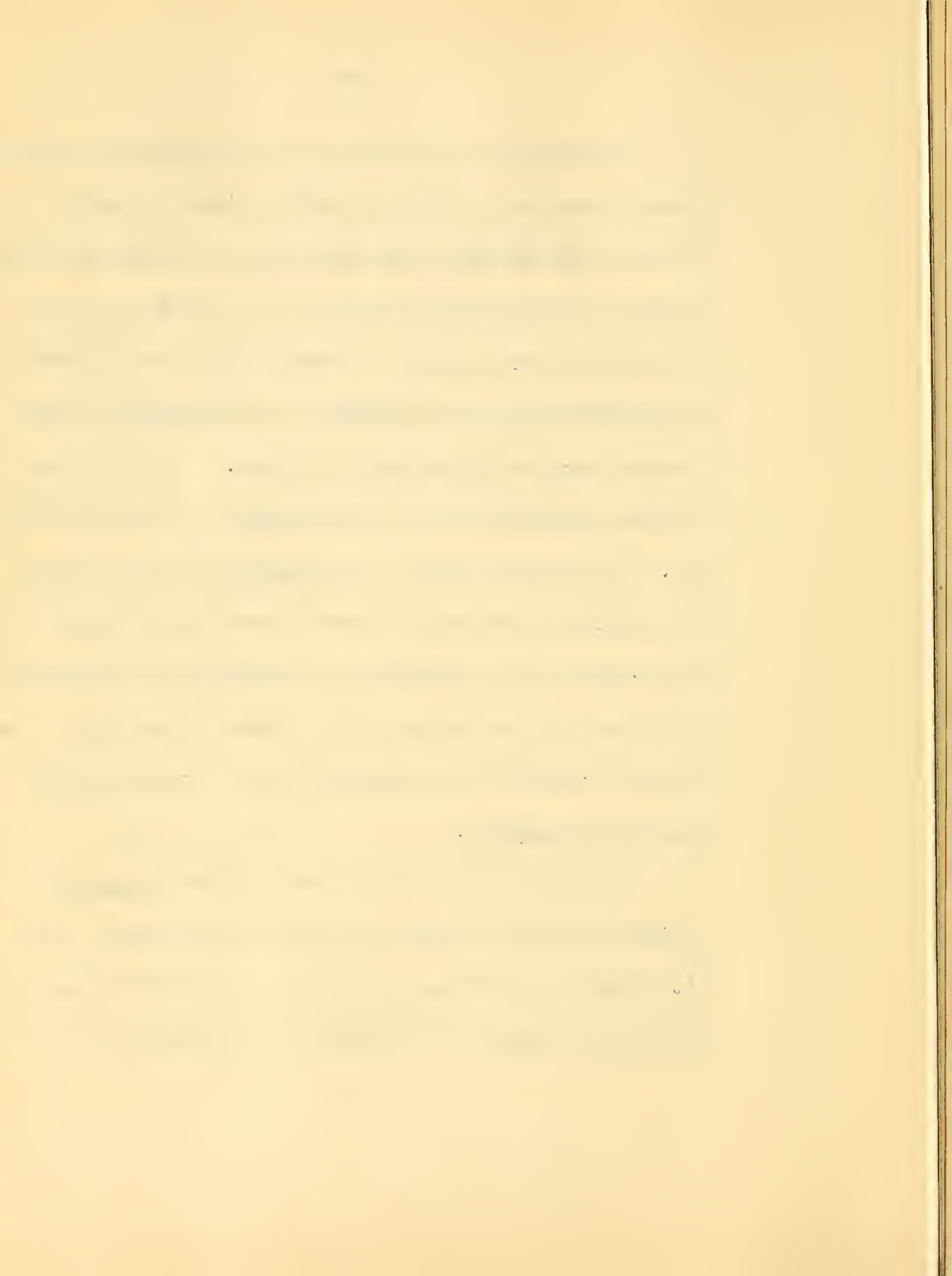
drawn in soft, wavy lines caused by the prominent cheek bones, the cheeks and maxillary muscles narrowing gradually to the chin, the distance from the latter to the nose, being a little shorter than on the former portrait. Finally, the cheeks, in this one, are more pronounced and agree with the words "little high" (pocas altas), used by Fernando Columbus, in describing his father's features.

The hair of the illustrious mariner, in the engraving of the Elogios, appears crispy, with some light curls, due probably, to the fancy of the engraver. It varies sufficiently from our copy (by Capriolo) in that, save a certain license from the engraver, that the hair is too regularly arranged, falling on each side of the face, in the style worn during the time of the Catholic Kings, and that it is almost straight and only suitable to a man of advanced age.



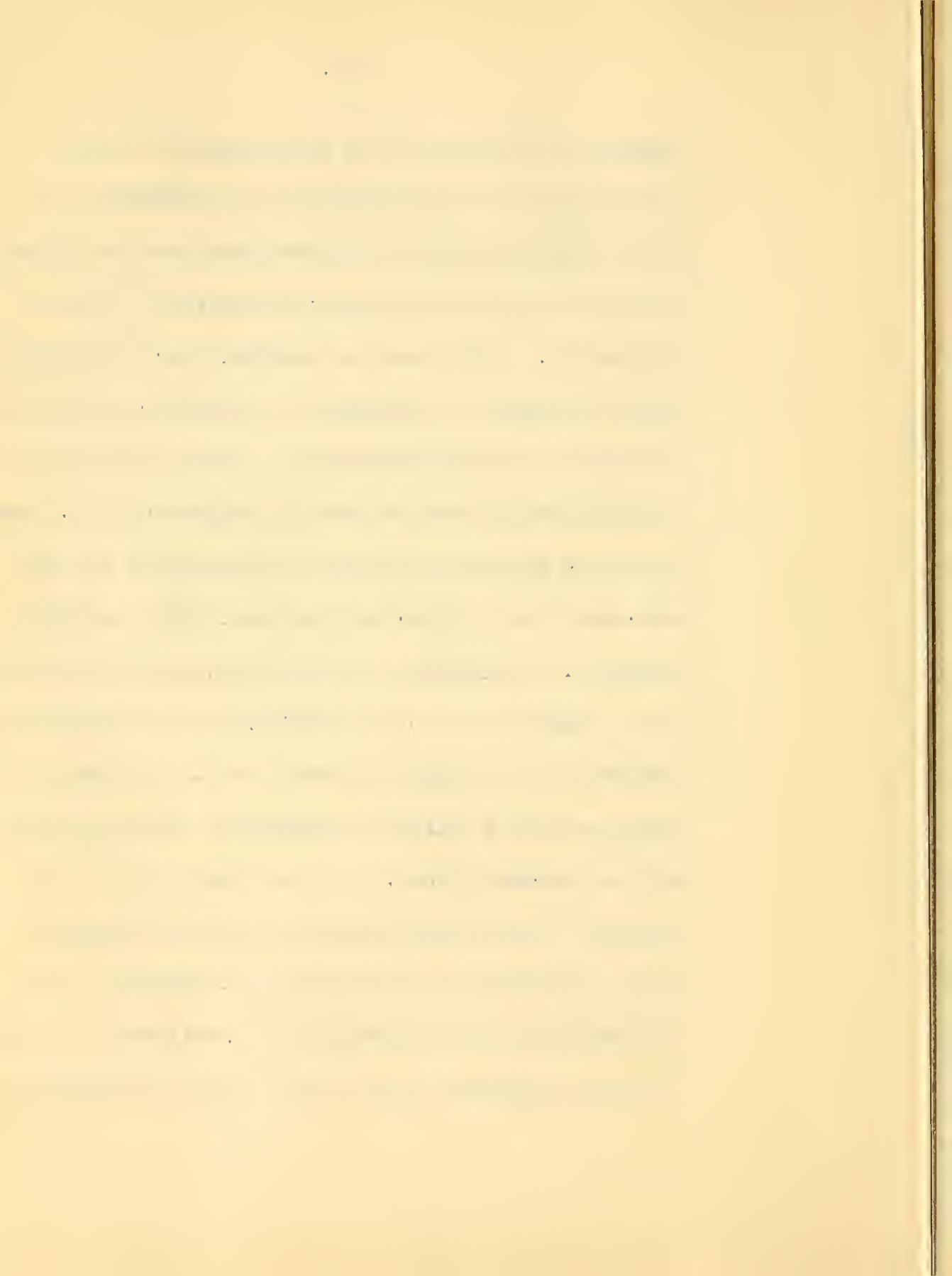
We can say but little as to his dress, judging from a bust which simply shows a kind of jacket (part of the black gown) buttoned up to the neck, from which is seen the white edge of a shirt or a narrow collar, as he used to dress in his retirement in Valladolid; and finally, a conventional cloak thrown carelessly across the chest. By this comparison between the two engravings, we believe that Mr. de los Rios will be convinced of the propriety of having placed on the front part of our Memoir, the copy of the engraving by Capriolo, as from what he said, in mentioning it, it seemed strange to him, that we should have considered that engraving, as the most valuable.

With it, and the first one in the Elogios, we tried to offer a sure guide for the artists; and it leads us to think, that the one placed to-day in the Naval Museum, was painted in accordance with it.



Let us now, examine the category and importance given to that model; "did the portrait exist or not in the Museum of Jovius?" if our remarks upon it are remembered, we said, in the Memoir referred to, that great princes of Europe sent artists to make copies of the series of portraits of illustrious men that were in it. A little later, Prince Aldobrandini made use of the same model for the collection of portraits which adorned his magnificent villa, (afterward removed to the Borghese Palace); the same type was copied for Pedro de Toledo, fifth Marquis of Villafranca. The portraits of Columbus in the belvedere and other collections in Vienna, in the house of the Marquis of Malpicco, &c., formed part of the above mentioned galleries, and are all painted more or less faithfully, and with the same costume as that on the Capriolo engraving. Although the hair and eye brows are

slightly altered, we will also mention the one preserved by the descendants of the Admiral, in Cucara (Montserrate) and published with his history written in 1809, by the Abbé Cancelieri, in our possession. All those we mention, and many others, which it would be wearisome to enumerate, were reproduced in hundred engravings, either single, or to illustrate books of travels, histories, &c., and every one alike (with slight differences) in appearance, in the face more or less full, costume and size. Therefore, it cannot be believed, that in the century in which Columbus died his likeness, doubtful and without any proff of its authenticity, could have been blindly accepted by educated persons and in learned places. At the same time, it is singular that of the plate in the latin Elogios, justly considered by the eminent Academician, and by ourselves as the oldest as an auxiliary document, we don't remember ever to have seen any reproduction

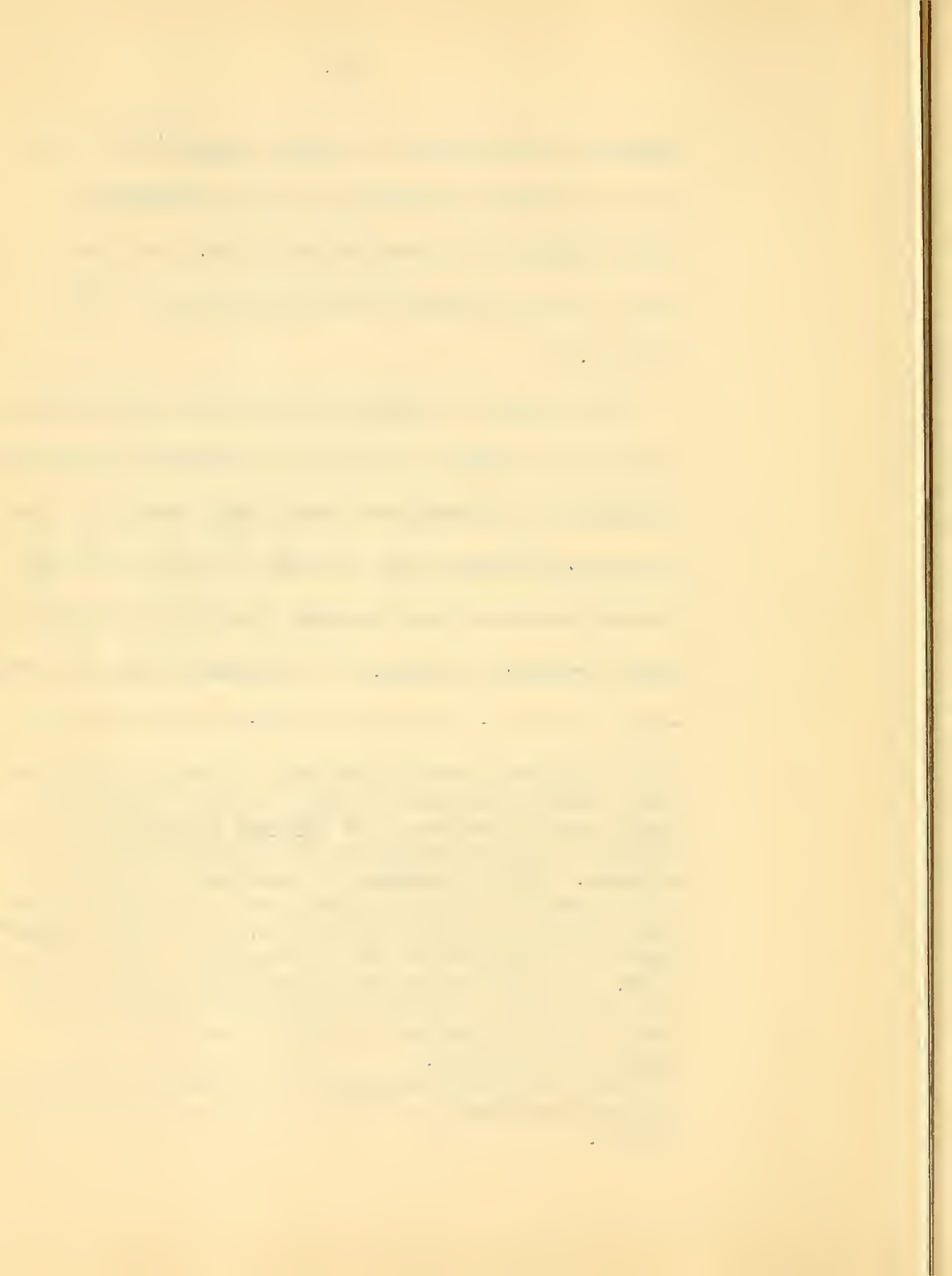


except the incomplete and small engraving of the series of Crispin de Paz, in which Columbus is represented with a nose almost flat; nor even among the countless lithographies made in this century.(1)

What shall we deduce from these considerations? one of two things; either that portrait painted as a sailor or a franciscan monk, may have been lost in some conflagrations between 1575 and 1578 (2), or another one must have existed wearing a civil and more dignified costume, for instance, like the one

(1) In passing we will mention a small and ordinary one, showing Columbus as very stout, and with a flat nose, taken from the "Grands Voyages," a type already rejected by modern and learned foreign writers. That likeness is somewhat a free copy of the original one of Columbus, but to which the engraver gave a vulgar appearance, and a nose different from the aquiline one of the Admiral; the left outline, the cheek bones or cheeks only, agree with our copy, and, though well engraved, almost every one in the collection of Crispin de Paz, leave much to be desired.

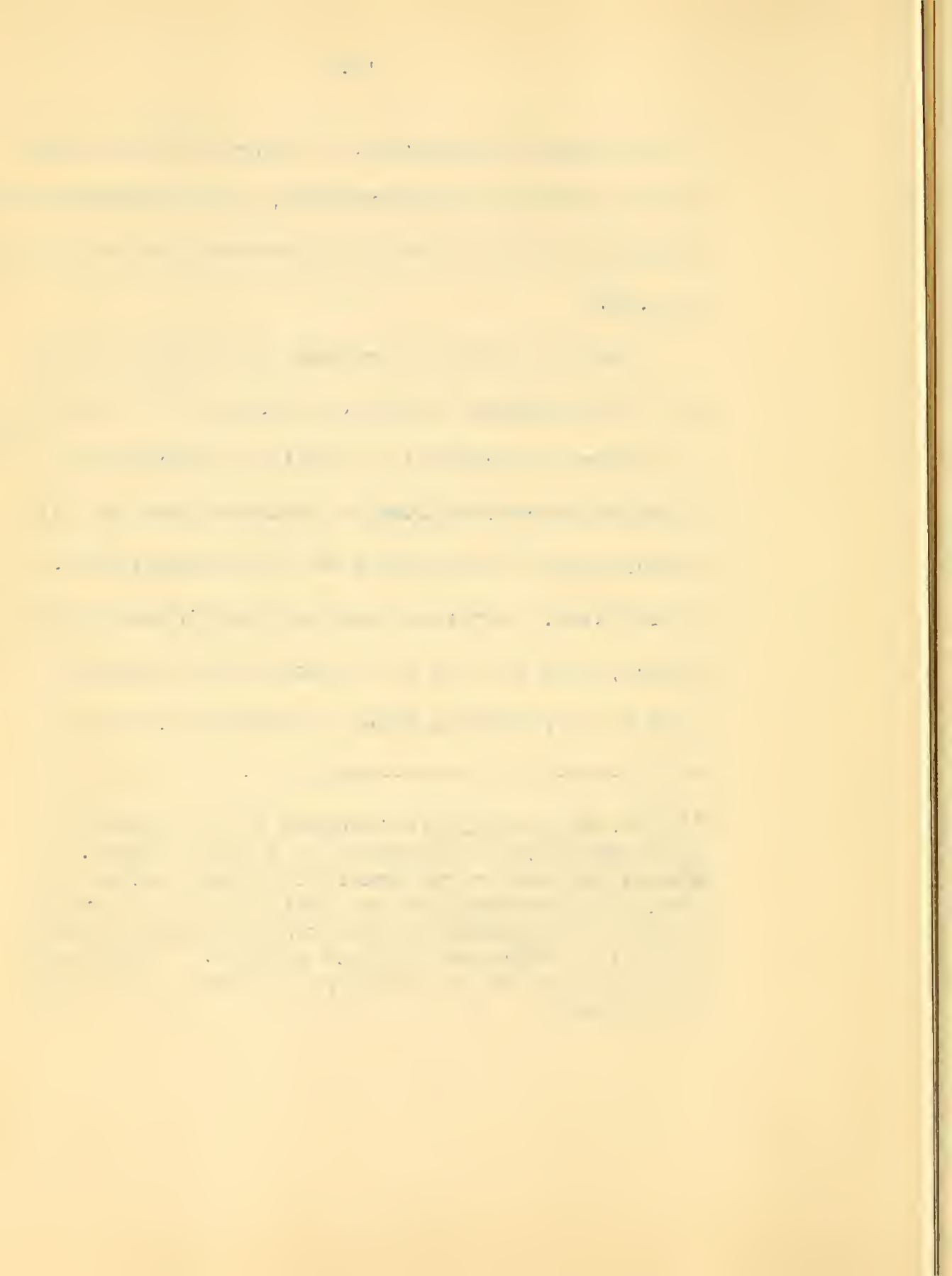
(2) Date of the publication of the wood engraving already mentioned, on the fourth page of our first Memoir.



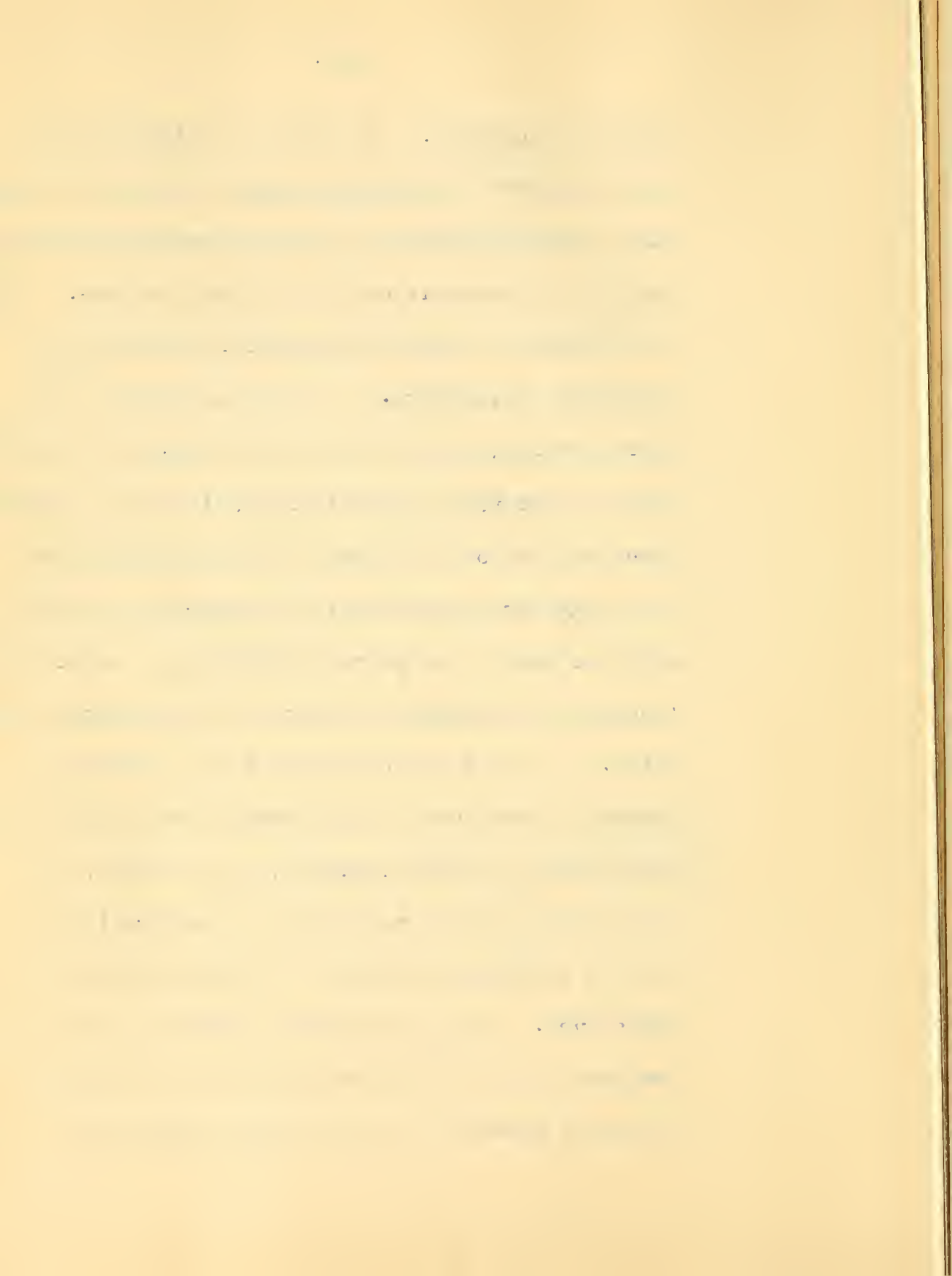
in the Capriolo engraving, and which took the place of the painting first mentioned, made in Spain where Columbus could have had his likeness taken more than once.⁽¹⁾.

But that portrait engraved by Capriolo, when and in what place, palace or museum, did it serve as a model or original to furnish a type to the numerous representations of Columbus from the XVI century down to the next one? We agree with Mr. de los Rios, that there was no other in the Jovio Museum, than the one in the dress of a sailor or that of a franciscan monk, and already lost as we

(1) Mr. de los Rios is informed that the portrait of Columbus was no longer in the Jovio Museum. though we said in our Memoir that that museum had been divided among the two families of the Counts of Como, it appears that it was preserved at least, until the middle of the last century. See Botari in his notes on the princeps edition of the Vidas de Vecfari.



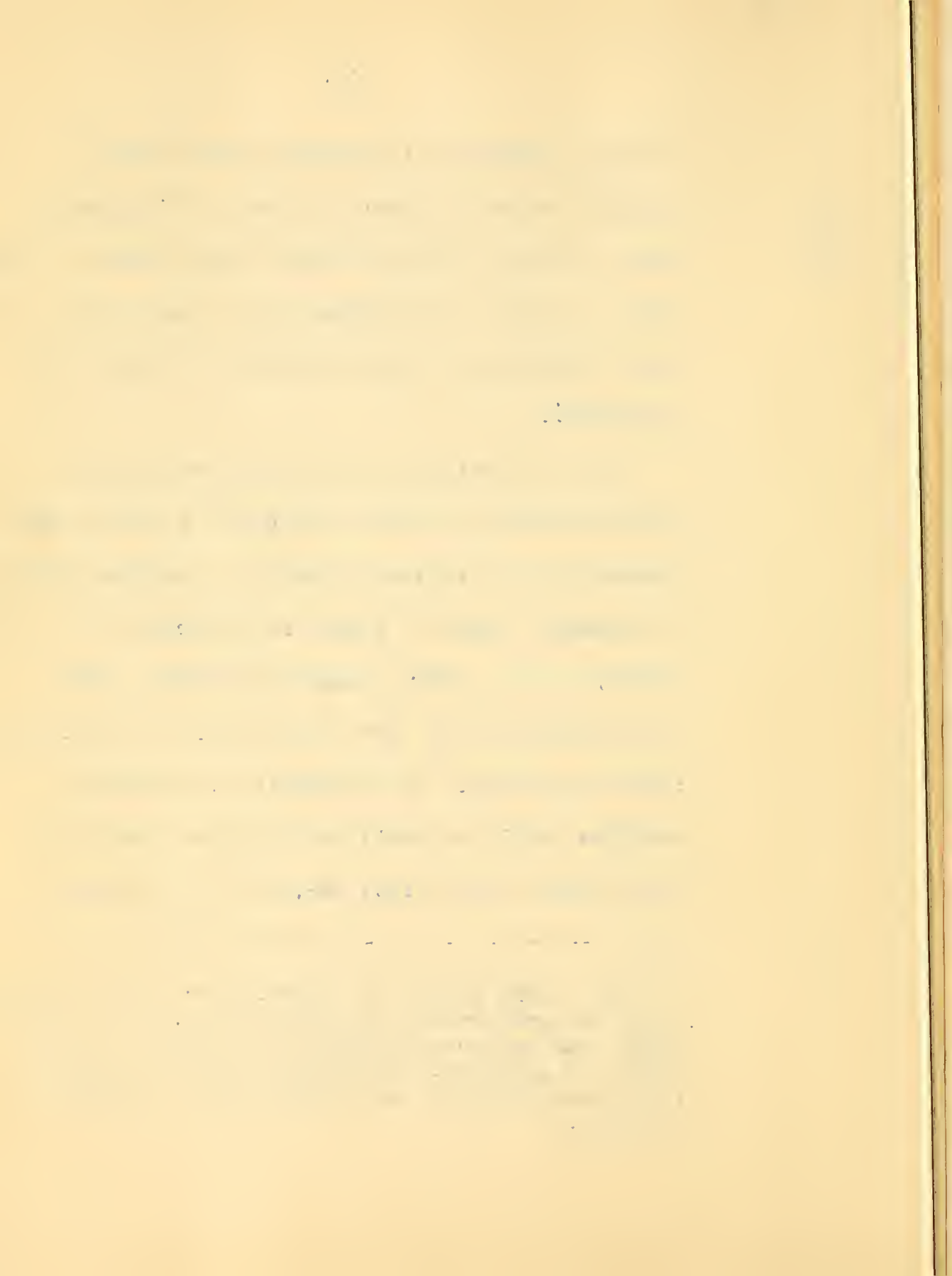
correctly supposed. It would be interesting to know where the original was seen, and how it looked; also to whom applied the numerous persons requesting for the portrait of the immortal Genoese. It is difficult to give a categorical answer based upon mere conjectures. One thing, however, appears certain, it is that, in the gallery in Florence where the Capriolo portrait existed for many years, there was one of the first, if not the first one of a long series representing celebrated men, and which we saw in the palace referred to, containing thousands of artistic treasures and priceless curiosities. In that royal residence the Cardinal of Medicis, a descendant of the Grand Duke, founded the magnificent collection existing to this day, and the only one in the world, for the portraits of all the celebrated artists of Europe, painted by themselves. Rome was another center for such collections due to the inborn taste of its Princes and Great Lords and to the artists around the



Vatican, walking in the shadow of the divine Raphael, we see the noble Marquis de Villafranca, Pedro de Toledo, giving orders to his agent in that city, to cause to be painted and to send to him, a large collection of the portraits of illustrious persons⁽¹⁾.

Well, if Columbus could have been painted more than once, why limit the noble and open countenance of the glorious mariner to a single picture or monument? Must we judge the wonderful XVI century by the narrow, shabby and selfish ideas of the present one? Now, laying aside the opinion that the portrait, in the Memoir, so generally accepted, could or could not have been made from life, prior to the first one, we do not think it

(1) That agent wrote: the emperors are all finished; there are one hundred and fifty-eight. The illustrious men number one hundred and fifty, of which fifty are completed. Of course, it is understood that these portraits were half length, or only to the bust.



improbable, that Columbus, on returning from his last **voyage**, and notwithstanding his grief and discouragement caused by the King's ingratitude, and that of the courtiers, a noble hearted admirer or artist, may not have been desirous of making the portrait of such a great man, or a sketch of him even in the church nearly opposite his inn, at Valladolid.

It now remains for us to discuss the portrait in oil in the National Library, which we are pleased to do, the more so, as we partly agreed with the opinion of Mr. de los Rios, for as soon as we read his learned Memoir, we hastened to examine it, and offers us now an opportunity to modify the appreciation we gave in our first memoir; an appreciation

due to the disagreeable effect produced upon us by the coarse restoration of the painting, and the strange modern gown which puzzled us, not less than the bad light and the height where it was



placed. Thus it was, that we soon suspected it might be one of the almost common copies of Columbus' portrait from the series made in the Jovio Museum for some of the Princes referred to in this essay, and in our first report and reproduced later, in the engraving by Capriolo. But, having had the occasion, some time after, to make a new and careful examination, kindly permitted to do so by Mr. Hartzembusch, then Director of that rich institution, we observed what we failed to see at first, for the reasons already explained.

Our attention was then called to the short hair mentioned by Mr. de los Rios, and which required a minute examination on account of the cutting being very little visible, and the back ground somewhat dark. He also remarks that, on this panel, the Admiral appears to be more than fifty years old, but concedes the fact that the exact age of a person cannot be established with any

certainty from a painting. In what relates to the different transformations in the costume of Columbus, as supposed to have taken place by our worthy academician (though not without some probability,) it seems to us, considering the thinness of the color spread over the body, that there is no other than what we believed after making our first inspection, nor even that there is any thing under the primitive sailor or franciscan dress, if such was ever the case. We observed upon the upper part of the chest some remains of a lighter and transparent color laid by two strokes of the brush, in an oblique direction toward the left; the top one might be supposed to indicate the upper border of the gown detached from the shady part of the neck. All what precedes, gives reasons to suspect, with Mr. de los Rios, that under the modern painting and the inappropriate long robe, an authentic, though injured copy of the first portrait may be found in the dress like that of a



monk, as described by the Curate de Palacios.

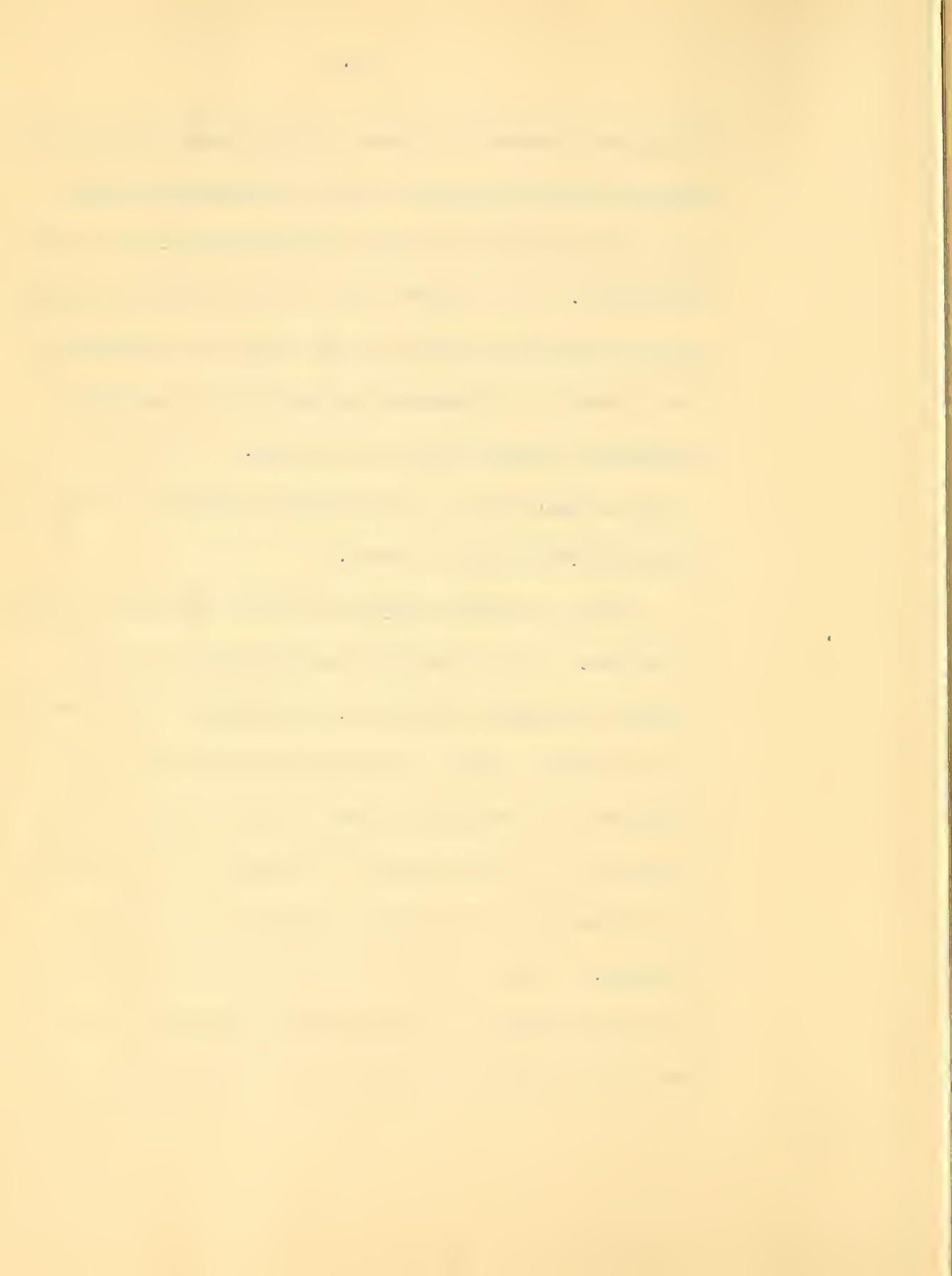
Should this discovery be made, the panel, in the Library, may be surmised as being a copy of the original which figured among the portraits collected by Jovius for his magnificent Museum, at Como.

A recent examination permits us now, to present the painting placed in a good light and in the condition it is found to-day, without referring to the costume. The broad forehead of the personage has been painted over, the horizontal touches of the brush between it and the upper muscles are scarcely preceptible, and almost nothing of the maxillary ones; all is smooth down to the chin. The cavity of the eyes from the eyebrows to the lower lid is very high, causing them to look too large as well as the pupils which are of a reddish brown, instead of gray, as were those of Columbus; the eye-lids are also large and feebly drawn and wanting in that

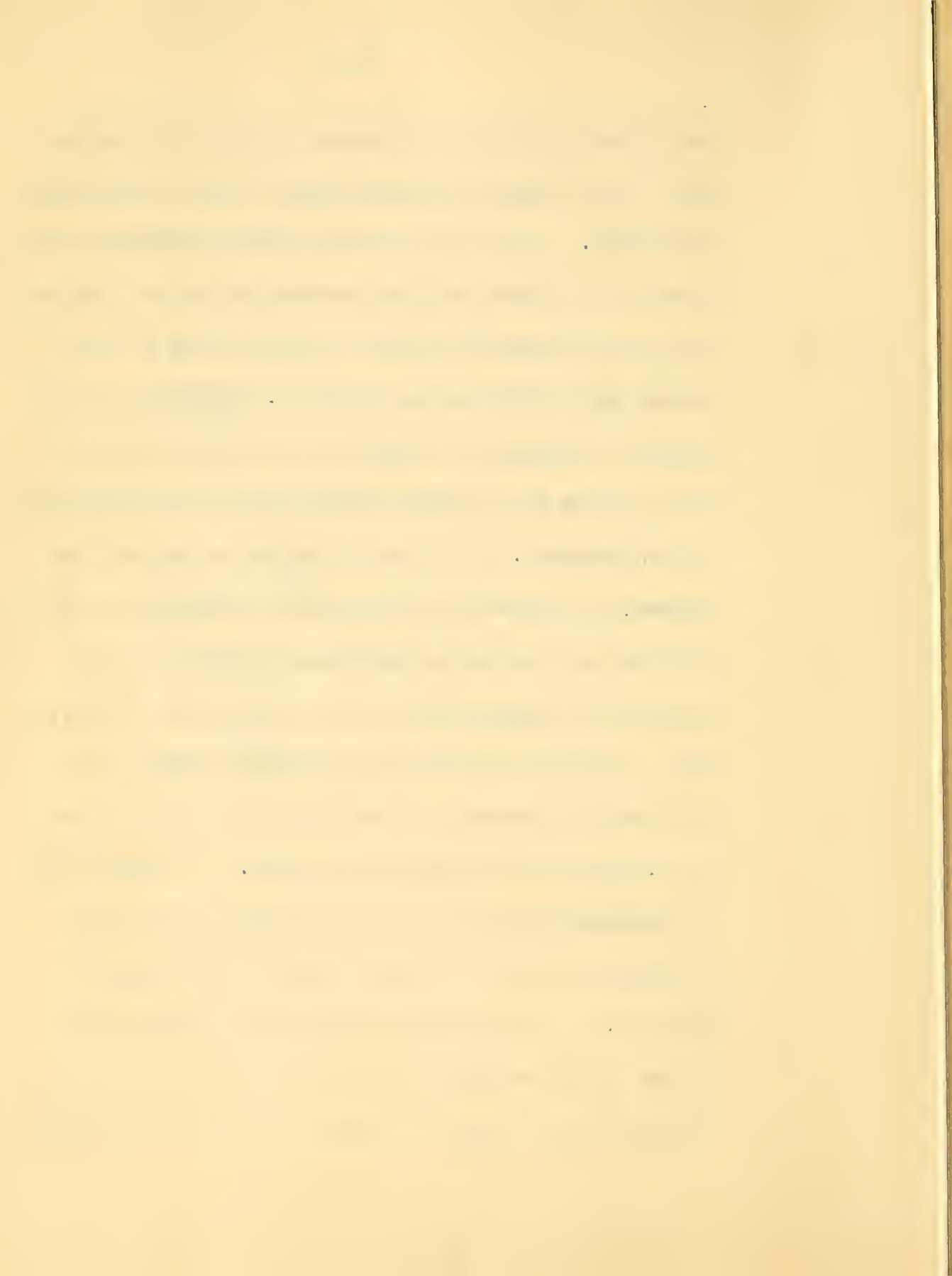


vague and penetrating gaze which shows at the same time the man of genius and of science noticeable in the sympathetic features reproduced in the wood engraving. The lower lip is very short, and painted over with some kind of red color and the upper one, drawn in a downward curve gives a sad and disdainful expression to the face. The nose slightly aquiline, and the chin, appear to us to be less altered than the rest.

Here, we think proper to point out some of the illusions of our eminent academician, due, no doubt, to noble patriotism, concerning that portrait in the first place, he supposes it to be the first copy from the original made for the Jovius Museum, from which it was brought by some of our Magnates, as a present to the King probably one of the Philips. Such a gift was a new thing, as there are many examples of paintings offered by Governors and Viceroyes, as well as by other persons, to



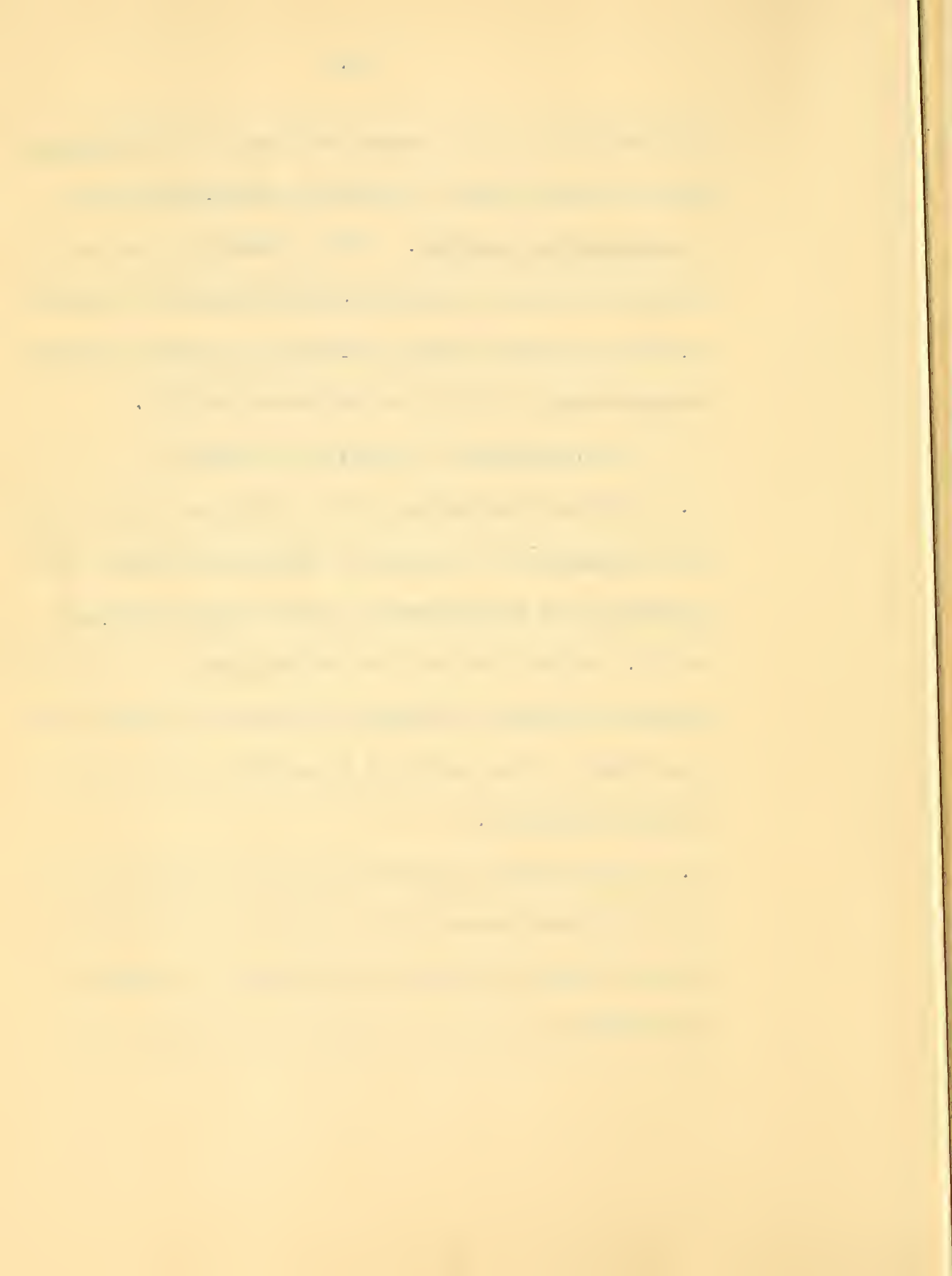
our Austrian Kings, all known to be fond of arts, and at that time more intelligent than most Princes of Europe. But that patriotic belief lacks foundation, for in none of the inventories of the properties of our monarchs, made from the time of the death of Philip II to Philip V. inclusive, which we were fortunate to find, and to make extracts from, there is no mention whatever of the portrait of the Admiral. In 1850, wishing to settle the matter, in answer to our question relating to the purchase of the above mentioned picture, we received the information from the National Library, that with other portraits of Hernan Cortes, of Lope and of Quevedo, it was bought, in 1763, from a Mr. Yanez, and came from Granada. It must also be observed that on the back, there is not the slightest trace of a mark, number, monogram, initial &c. It is easily believed that they were parts of the collections made by scholars and amateurs, such as that of Argote de Molina, mentioned



by Ruscelli, in the second edition of the Empresas, and to many others to which we referred in the Iconografía Española. But, though we have considered it as the oldest portrait known in Madrid, it does not prove that there may not exist another copy brought to Spain at an anterior date.

In conclusion, we leave on record:

1. That the engraving of the "Elogios," representing Columbus in a sailor or franciscan dress, recommended and considered as the original (Matrix) by Mr. de los Rios and the undersigned, is the most ancient and most reliable evidence of having been made from a true portrait from life, of the celebrated navigator.
2. That the said engraving does not comply fully with the requirements, and would be insufficient for an artist desirous of producing the features of Columbus, that it is coarse, and some of the



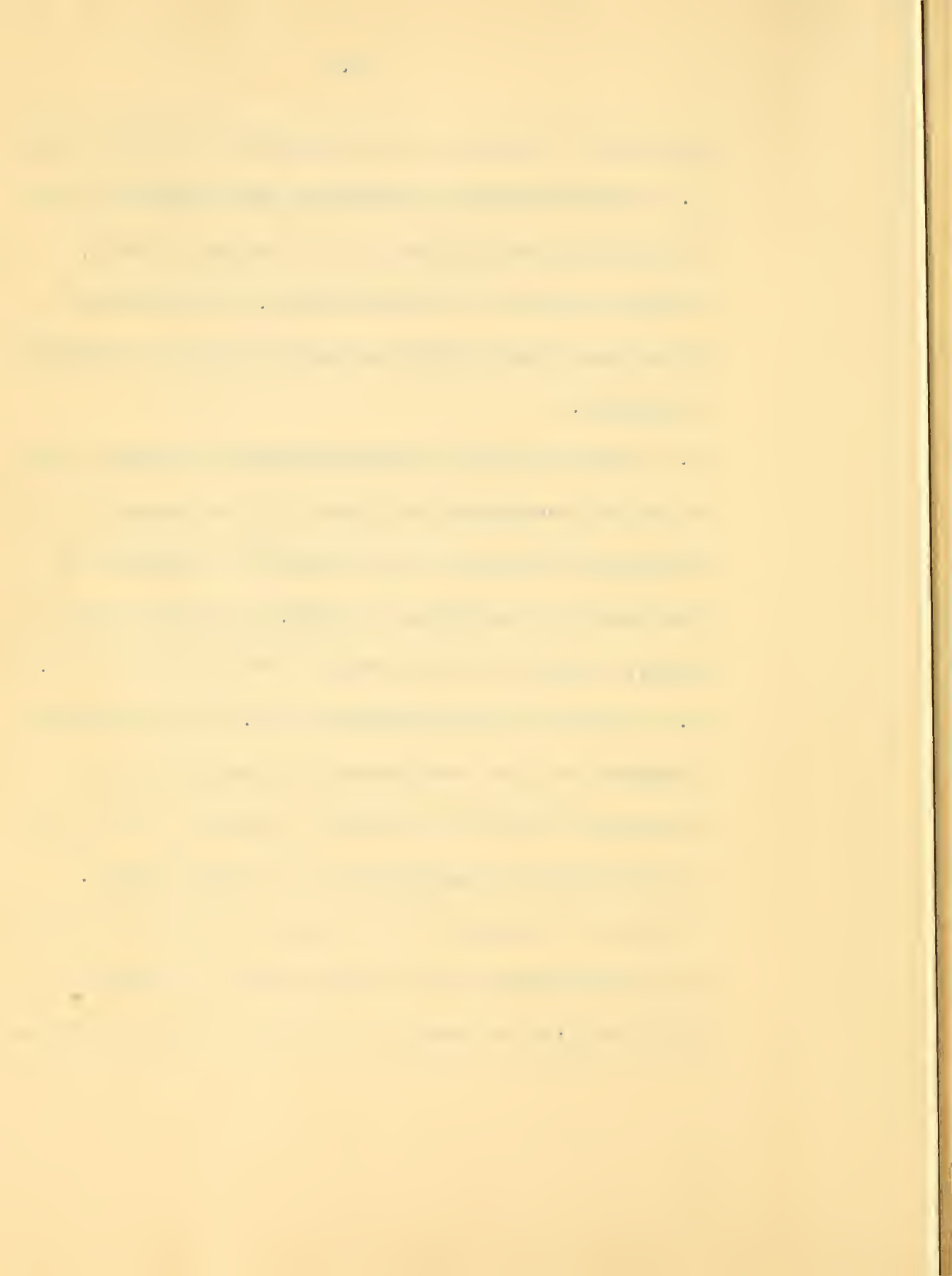
important lineaments are confused, and badly drawn.

3. That our plate by Capriolo, for want of an authentic painted portrait, to a certain extent, answers better to the conditions, the features being more pronounced, but both ought to be equally consulted.

4. That, for well founded reasons, the model from which the engraving was made, and was copied by celebrated artists, to be placed in various collections, may have been a second portrait of the Admiral, painted a few years after the first one.

5. That the learned Memoir of Mr. de los Rios has prompted the new examination of the portrait of Columbus, now in the National Library, and the few instructions we suggested for its restoration.

Finally, in regard to the dress in which the glorious mariner ought to be represented, either that mentioned in our Memoir, or the one fully described



by Mr. de los Rios, is the only one that could be properly adopted, in some well known and authentic incident in the life of Columbus; but, in our opinion, since he is to be enthroned on a glorious monument worthy of his fame, he must be represented in no other costume than an official one such as we proposed in our memoir, and approved, we believe, by the eminent Academician, or in some other dress appropriate to his rank of Admiral, of illustrious personage or courtier. Mr. de los Rios, thinks, however, that Columbus should, with more propriety, be represented with the dress he probably wore when standing on the bow of the Santa Maria, during the memorable night of the 11th of October 1492, when a distant moving light moving here and there, showed him the land that his science and unwavering faith had conjectured.

Even in the supposition that our opinion upon

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